

Lake Champlain Federal Partners Meeting
Summary
May 17, 2005
Natural Resources Conservation Service, 356
Mountain View Drive, Colchester, Vermont,
and by Conference Call

Provided by:
Erik H. Beck, US EPA

Revised October 19, 2005

Final Minutes as Revised

Executive Summary Presented at LCBP Steering Committee Meeting on June 14, 2005

- Congressional delegation update provided by Robert Paquin and Tom Berry.
- Consensus that meetings should be moved around, and not in Colchester, in the hopes that we can bring in a wider array of agencies and offices.
- Hope to bring in additional agencies to the Partnership, including the IJC and USCG.
- Fran Keeler retiring as the State Conservationist in Vermont for USDA NRCS. Judith Doerner is his replacement.
- NRCS reported they are making progress on their various conservation programs despite a backlog.
- USFWS reported they are searching for a replacement for Eric Derleth, the Partners for Wildlife staff who moved to the Concord, NH office. Dave Tilton also reported on the reduction of operations at the Pittsford Hatchery. Further, the MOU signing event with the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission was very successful.

- The Town Forums sponsored by Senator Jeffords office and the US Army Corps were successful.
- USGS reported that they are looking to close their agricultural BMP project because the host farmer is no longer interested in pursuing the project.
- USGS also reported that they are looking at working on one or more of the following topics in the Lake Champlain Basin watershed:
 - Basin-wide reconnaissance on emerging chemical contaminants;
 - Developing a basin-wide model for phosphorous;
 - Continued mercury research and monitoring work;
 - Enhancements to the current work with Englesby Brook and urban runoff BMPs.
- Erik Beck provided an overview of EPA's new competition policy and how it might affect the Lake Champlain Basin Program.
- The federal partners are working with the Technical Advisory Committee to refine the alewife control task for FY2005.

Attendees

- In Person:
 - Dave Hoyt, Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - Brian Mrazik, U.S. Geological Survey
 - Dave Tilton, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - Erik Beck, Chair, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, New England Region
 - Robert Paquin, Senator Leahy's Office
 - Tom Berry, Senator Jeffords' Office
 - Mark Malchoff, Lake Champlain SeaGrant
- By Phone:
 - Jenifer Thalhauser, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NY District
 - Beckett Grealish, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region Two Office

Summary

- Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes: Dave Tilton approved, and Dave Hoyt seconded approval of the minutes of February 8, 2005 without revision.
- Congressional Delegation Update: Robert Paquin and Tom Berry provided an update on the Fiscal Year 2006 appropriations picture for the federal agencies concerned with Lake Champlain. They indicated that the funding picture was generally positive. They discussed the reorganization of the Senate Appropriation subcommittees, which moved EPA from the committee that dealt with Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and other independent agencies, into the same subcommittee that deals with the Department of Interior.
- Need for Bylaws: Erik Beck and Dave Tilton volunteered to look in to the need to write bylaws for this committee.
- Broader attendance: The attendees discussed ways to bring in federal agencies and offices that have not been participating in meetings of the Lake Champlain Federal Partners. It was decided that we should move the meetings around, and not always have them in Vermont. It was further decided that we should have the November 2005 meeting on the New York side of the Lake Champlain basin. Additionally, it was decided that the current members of the committee should reach out to other federal agencies, including:
 - U.S. Coast Guard
 - Park Service
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers–New England District Office and the Essex Junction, Vermont Field Office.
 - International Joint Commission
- Congressional Statement: Tom Berry reported that the Lake Champlain Senate Delegation had agreed on the following statement to be put into the revised draft of "Opportunities for Federal Action:"

We support the efforts of the Federal Partners for Lake Champlain as they collaborate for the benefit of the people and ecosystem of the Basin. We greatly appreciate the work of so many dedicated Federal public servants to protect and restore this local, regional, national, and international gem. Through cooperation, teamwork, and coordination these Federal agencies will continue to play a huge role in implementing *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Lake Champlain Basin.*"

Erik indicated that he would work with USGS to make the revision to the document and have it published.

- EPA Update: Erik Beck gave an update on the revised competition policy of EPA and its impact on the Lake Champlain Basin Program. Beckett Grealish was introduced as the new Lake Champlain Coordinator for EPA Region Two, replacing Theresa Faber, who retired. Beckett has been with EPA for about six and one half years, and was previously involved with compliance and lead paint.
- USDA NRCS Update: Dave Hoyt gave an update on NRCS programs in Vermont. Fran Keeler, the Vermont State Conservationist, has retired. A replacement had not yet been named. He reported that funding for the EQIP program was down \$1.3 million in 2005, to \$4.3 million. He also provided updates on the Farm and Ranchland Protection initiative, the wetlands reserve initiative, and the Grasslands Reserve Program.
- Dave Tilton provided an update on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service activities. He reported that they were gearing up for their peak field season, which featured alewife surveys in Lake Champlain. They planned electro-shocking surveys four nights per week *during the spawning season*. The State of Vermont was continuing its deep water trawls for alewives. Dave also reported that it was sea lamprey spawning season, and that their trapping work was in full swing. Dave reported that they were actively working to fill their staff opening for their Partners for Wildlife position. He further described to the group that operations at the Pittsford, VT federal hatchery were being reduced due to budget cuts and that the Atlantic salmon smolts would be transferred to other facilities.
- Dave Tilton also reported on the success of their May 5 event. This event celebrated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Lake Champlain Cooperative and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. Senator Leahy and Governor Douglas spoke at the event, which was held on the Burlington Waterfront.
- Brian Mrazik of the USGS reported that they were having continued problems with their agricultural BMP site on Little Otter Creek and were considering closing down the project and redirecting those funds to other uses. He also reported that he had a successful meeting with Bill Howland of the Basin Program to discuss four target areas of work for USGS on Lake Champlain. These areas include:
 - Basin-wide reconnaissance on emerging chemical contaminants;
 - Developing a basin-wide model for phosphorous *ala* SPARROW model;
 - Continued mercury research and monitoring work;
 - Enhancements to the current work with Englesby Brook and urban runoff BMPs.

Brian reported that concept papers were being developed and would be shared with the TAC and this group.

- Brian further reported that they anticipate working with FEMA on flood map updates in Rutland and Washington counties, and that they are working on a road salt study of surface waters in the Chittenden County area. Brian also reported on draft House of Representatives appropriation language that would impact their ability to operate their cooperative hydrologic monitoring program.
- Mark Malchoff of SeaGrant reported on a Water Quality Workshop that was taking place on August 15, 16, and 17 at Paul Smiths College. Aquatic nuisance species and their management were to be a major component of this workshop. Spread prevention was a major theme as well. Mark stated that Plattsburg State and SeaGrant are trying to establish a Watershed Alliance similar to that in place at the University of Vermont.
- Mark also reported on progress made on the feasibility study of erecting barriers in the Champlain Canal to block the spread of aquatic invasive species. He reported that there are a number of technical and institutional challenges to implementing many of the concepts in the report, and that they are working to meet those challenges.
- Additionally, Mark reported that nationally there is some movement to bolster federal legislation to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species, and that revised legislation would likely be finalized in November of 2005.
- The partners had a wide-ranging discussion about opportunities for collaboration to be continued during the August 30, 2005 meeting.
- Dave Tilton reported that the Town Forums sponsored by Senator Jeffords office and the US Army Corps were successful.